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ABSTRACT

The Penitentiary of New Mexico (PNM) is currently offering the course, Report Writing for Officers, to teach correctional officers how to write better reports. This course focuses primarily on misconduct reports and supporting memos and touches upon the interdependence the course creates between the areas of treatment and security at PNM, helping these two areas to work more closely together for a common client. The teacher strives to remain as neutral and objective as possible, and this attitude often rubs off on officers, giving them a more objective viewpoint toward inmates. The officers learn to write better, more objective reports. Other dimensions of this course are the officers' improved self-image, self-respect, and self-confidence; inmates' realization of a more equitable due process of law as reports become more objective; and inmates' increased respect for officers who write efficacious reports. (The following handouts are attached: course description; spelling, plurals, possessives, capitalization, and punctuation tests; first course assignment; essentials of a well-written report; and examples of poor reports and a poor supporting memo.) (YLB)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
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Date: December 2, 1983

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Place: Franklin Plaza Hotel, Philadelphia, PA.

Occasion: National Adult Education Conference

PRESENTER: Robert Saam - ABE Instructor - New Mexico State
Penitentiary

TITLE: NEW DIMENSIONS IN CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION

To introduce myself, I am Robert Saam, Adult Basic Education Instructor at the New Mexico State Penitentiary. I have taught at the penitentiary for five years and prior to that, I taught at Santa Fe High School for ten years and at Santa Fe Preparatory School (a private school) for ten and a half years. However, my experience at PNM (Penitentiary of New Mexico) is my first experience in teaching adults.

This morning, I hope to present to you what we at the New Mexico State Penitentiary feel are some new dimensions in correctional education. It is understood that I teach inmates, that I was brought into the Department of Education at PNM to do just that, and that I am still doing. At present, I teach upper level inmates or students in college prep classes and also college students who need special attention in writing skills in order to be more successful in college. I am also teaching pre-GED students to write sentences and paragraphs. In all, I have taught almost every level at PNM since I joined the Department in 1979.

However, more than a year ago, I was approached by the Training Division at PNM to teach officers how to write better reports. My own department, the Department of Education, strongly supported such an idea; consequently, I put together a course entitled Report Writing for Officers. Last year in this course, I taught

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captains and lieutenants so that they, in turn, could advise their officers under them how to write better reports. This fall, we decided to change this procedure and begin teaching the officers themselves how to write better reports. This way, we cut out the middleman and hit directly at the primary source, the correctional officer, who is fundamentally more responsible for and the brunt of inmate behavior than any other particular person (position) in our penitentiary.

This course has been rewarding, difficult, but, most of all, instructive concerning the plight of officers and the writing of reports --- primarily misconduct reports and supporting memos. Last year, I requested and was granted extra duty in serving on the Disciplinary Committee, a committee that acts as a judgmental tribunal at PNM. When doing this, I paid particular attention to the problems with the reports that officers had written about inmates. I determined, as this experience continued, that any dent I could make in improving reports would be valuable to the prison --- not only to officers but also to inmates.

Thus, the title of my discourse today --- New Dimensions in Correctional Education. I don't know how many of you here today have someone in your respective departments of education who teach officers such a course, or if some of you here teach such a course. If so, then I hope you share with me its importance, which is the first dimension I should mention. That we now teach such a course is a definite step forward in our penitentiary.

Another dimension this course touches upon is the interdependence it creates between the areas of Treatment and Security at PNM, causing these two antipodal areas to work more closely together in the same institution for a common client. Without question, the first concern in any prison is Security. Officers are totally responsible by mandate from society to make and keep prisons

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secure. As a result of that mandate, the area of SECURITY often tries to ignore that aspect of incarceration which is TREATMENT. Prior to the infamous February, 1980, PNM riot, officers cared little for TREATMENT regarding inmates, often referring to us in education as the "glorified baby-sitters." This stigma stems partially from an insecurity on the part of officers in that much of what an officer does is just that --- baby-sitting.

However, the riot and the Apodaca-Duran Consent Decree have changed attitudes within the seams and fabric of the penitentiary. Some officers have come to realize that they must readjust or leave, and readjustment to those who have stayed has meant realizing that their primary responsibility is to care for inmates and attempt to make the prison as safe for inmates within as well as society without. This change in attitude means relearning, often learning what was not once learned. In addition, a new kind of officer began appearing on the scene. A number of new officers are better qualified than heretofore with much recruitment of officers taking place outside of New Mexico. Consequently, the competition is increasing to become better qualified in every way for the position. This includes a more moderate approach toward dealing with inmates, which, in turn, has brought about a desire and need to write better reports.

When I first offered this report writing course, this attitude reflected itself in the attitude of two captains, both influential and highly respected in the prison hierarchy, who took the course and the course immediately gained a certain amount of status. Those two captains influenced certain lieutenants to take the course; this in turn has influenced officers to take the course. Now that the course has become somewhat established, there is a waiting list of officers who wish to take the course. A further dimension in attitude is that there is much greater emphasis on TRAINING in New Mexico, which is having a decided effect on the entire educational sphere at the penitentiary.

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This course also affords me, their instructor, with a different view of an officer. Realize --- this course is a separate entity from the teaching of inmates, which I do on a daily basis. But in teaching officers, I am often in the position that the officer exercises with an inmate, an authoritarian position or role. In my class, they, the officers, are subjected to me as a teacher; I have power over them which, though not tyrannical, is the same power which they have reacted to since their school days, the automatic fear of a teacher. As adults, they often act like children and immediately start the course by telling me all the things they can't do --- such as " I can't spell";...."I can't write too good";....or "I never was any good in English." Naturally, after one session, I realize they are often telling the truth, and as with all teachers I come to know things about them educationally they don't want known: that is what they don't know, don't know how to do well, sometimes don't know how to do at all. They come into class with handicaps, and my role is to assuage that situation as much as possible and teach them at the same time.

To alleviate such a situation, my obligation is to create an atmosphere of collaboration --- that we work together to improve their lot, that I am in a position to help them, not intimidate them. Thus, several interactions occur; I work with them to relieve that kind of tension so they can learn what they need to learn, which is HOW to write better reports. In addition, they know I teach inmates; they also know I am teaching them; consequently, they come to realize I do not favor the inmates NOR do I favor the officers, nor do I ever pass any information I may hear from them out of that classroom situation. I am understanding of both respective positions and situations. I remain as neutral as possible, as objective as possible. This inmates respect; this officers respect. This attitude often rubs off on officers more than inmates, meaning a more objective viewpoint toward inmates.

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Note the word: OBJECTIVE. It is extremely important that officers become objective toward inmates, that they not waver back and forth by being too subjectively sympathetic at one moment and unduly harsh at another. This also is the object of learning to write better reports, that the reports become more objective, that the reports are better written, that the officers become better writers.

Another dimension is in this last statement --- better writers and what happens when an officer learns to write more effectively than he did when he came into the class. Through a greater understanding of how to use words more accurately to clarify what actually does happen regarding inmates also gives the officer a better command of the written word, which gives him greater confidence at striving toward a better position by having a certain amount of confidence that his inability to write more coherently will not stand in his way. Most of the officers I have taught are victims of an educational system which in many ways has failed them. However, they have also failed it in that they haven't demanded more. Still, we have to keep in mind that the humna being, each one of us, is not so wonderfully constituted as to fight all of the pressures in the world to achieve that golden education we all hear so much about, but which truly does not exist until we help to make it exist. Nevertheless, as adults, these officers do respond to this course, because it improves their self-image, their self-respect, their self-confidence. To me personally, this is one of the best dimensions of this course for officers.

Another extremely important dimension which I feel happens in this course is that this course helps inmates to realize a more equitable due process of law within our system. By improving the writing of misconduct reports with more

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uniformity of style, content control, and accuracy, inmates do realize greater fairness and security as reports become more objective concerning inmate misconduct. Prior to the riot and the Consent Decree, it was much too easy to write up an inmate and have it sail through the Disciplinary Committee. Consequently, many inmates were punished unfairly and often the wrong inmate was punished because of inaccuracies in numbers, names, and information. Today, that is no longer true. More reports are thrown out than ever before with the consequence that officers are becoming aware of the necessity of writing effectively and skillfully.

Such a due process of law also applies to the officers. Officers become more secure when they realize the system works when their reports are efficacious, consequently not leaving an officer in a compromised situation with an inmate because of a poorly written report which is dismissed (thrown out) by the Committee. An inmates's beating a report is one of the most discouraging, nay dangerous, events which can happen in a prison, particularly if the success on the part of the inmate is the result of the inability of an officer to write a report which is effective and which "sticks," as the saying goes. Why also dangerous? When certain inmates beat a report, they remain at large and are often dangerous to other inmates, often roving the corridors looking for new victims.

Another added dimension occurs which inmates know they have beaten a poorly written report. This downgrades the already suspect reputation of an officer, a reputation which already suffers from an authoritarian status. However, this has a reverse side effect on inmates. Their security is endangered by an officer who is not respected. In other words, this officer is no longer respected, is no longer feared, if I may use that word.

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I use the word "fear" only in that inmates do respect (fear) officers who are objective and enforce rules that are clearly defined in prison policy, even though they, the inmates, know that they will be punished if a report STICKS. Still, they, the inmates, do not object to reports which are clear, accurate, and truthful, presenting a situation as it actually happened. Inmates live in a reality which realizes with a shrug of the shoulders that when they break a rule, they will probably suffer the consequences by paying for the privilege of breaking that rule. However, if they beat the report, that officer loses the respect of ALL inmates; consequently, the more prepared an officer is to write well-written reports, the more respect he will receive from inmates.

At the penitentiary, this course meets twice a week for an hour for six weeks or everyday for an hour for three weeks; participation by the officers is strictly voluntary; credit for the course is given on the basis of attendance. An ongoing course, officers may reenter the course at any time. However, first choice is given to those officers who have not attended the class previously.

Some of the handouts I am now going to give you and discuss with you evolved through my teaching this course at the penitentiary and also teaching at the Training Academy for the Department of Corrections in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

HANDOUTS

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1) Course at Academy | 9) Examples of two poor Reports |
| 2) Spelling Test | 10) Example of a poor Supporting Memo |
| 3) Plurals Test | 11) Well-written Report which failed |
| 4) Possessives Test | in Committee because of lack of |
| 5) Capitalization Test | proper documentation, an element |
| 6) Punctuation Test | often overlooked by staff |
| 7) First Paper | |
| 8) Essentials of a Good Report | |

Report Writing

Upon completion of this two hour/four day course in Report Writing at the Training Academy of New Mexico's Department of Corrections, the officers will have a greater understanding and appreciation of their individual ability to do the following:

- 1) Accomplish specific spelling skills, punctuation skills, and usage skills
- 2) Write one paragraph on the prescribed subject "I," using the following: Who, What, When, Where, and How. This will be evaluated by the instructor and after a discussion of these paragraphs in class, the paragraphs will be rewritten in class
- 3) Learn or review the essentials of a well-written report in a correctional facility
- 4) Write a misconduct report based upon a typical situation that occurs in a correctional facility
- 5) Correct and evaluate these reports in class
- 6) Rewrite these misconduct reports

The final grade for this course is based upon test results and written exercises.

Dates of Course: October 11 - 14, 1983

Instructor: Robert Saam
ABE Instructor
New Mexico State Penitentiary
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Assisting the instructor in this course is Arthur Murphy

50 SPELLING DEMONS

These words are among the commonest in our language. You need to spell one or another of them almost every time you pick up your pencil. Find out through dictation which ones you misspell, and check them on the list. Turn back to this list frequently, and have someone test you on your mistakes. Don't be satisfied until you can spell every word as readily as you can spell your own name.

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. accept | 26. meant |
| 2. across | 27. minute |
| 3. all right | 28. necessary |
| 4. already | 29. occasion |
| 5. always | 30. occurred |
| 6. among | 31. omitted |
| 7. beginning | 32. peculiar |
| 8. believe | 33. principal |
| 9. business | 34. probably |
| 10. chose | 35. quiet |
| 11. coming | 36. receive |
| 12. description | 37. separate |
| 13. disappear | 38. shining |
| 14. disappoint | 39. surprise |
| 15. doesn't | 40. their |
| 16. equipment | 41. therefore |
| 17. forty | 42. too |
| 18. friend | 43. tragedy |
| 19. government | 44. truly |
| 20. grammar | 45. until |
| 21. hoping | 46. usually |
| 22. its | 47. weather |
| 23. laboratory | 48. who's |
| 24. library | 49. women |
| 25. losing | 50. writing |

NAME: _____

Form the plural of the following words:

1. teacher - _____

2. officer - _____

3. beach - _____

4. search - _____

5. boat - _____

6. coat - _____

7. tomato - _____

8. hero - _____

9. complex - _____

10. sex - _____

11. Jones - _____

12. treasure - _____

13. deer - _____

14. sheep - _____

15. vegetable - _____

16. gas - _____

17. church - _____

18. book - _____

19. man - _____

NAME: _____

Underline the correct form given in parentheses and then write it out in the appropriate blank supplied after each sentence.

1. (It's, Its) (too, to) bad you (can't, cant') go.

_____/_____

2. Not only does (its, it's) design bother me, (it's, its) not a good design in terms of (its, it's) safety features.

_____/_____

3. (Lets, Let's) go to the State Fair before (its, it's) over.

_____/_____

4. (It's, Its) a (man's, mans') hat. _____

5. (There's, There are) the (man's, men's) clothing department.

_____/_____

6. (You're, Your) child needs a (girls', girl's) coat, not a (boys', boy's).

_____/_____

7. You will need two (girl's, girls') coats, which you can find in the (children's, childrens) department.

8. That is (Charles's, Charleses') hat, not (yours, your's).

_____/_____

9. (Don't, Dont') go into the (officers', officer's) quarters.

_____/_____

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

A Short Quiz on Capitalization: (Capitalize as is necessary by writing over the letter)

correctional officer I jose padilla, my friend, has a birthday on june 6. every june, which is the beginning of summer more or less, we give him a party and invite all the members of his club, the liar's club, to the party. most of them usually come to the party unless it's on a monday. if it falls on a saturday though, they all come, which means there are many correctional officers, lieutenants, and captains to feed from the south, east, west, southwest, northeast, and northwest, which means they come from all over --- not just the united states, but european countries such as france, italy, and spain as well as great britain and its commonwealth affiliates, canada and australia, and even from africa, china, japan, and the phillipines.

PUNCTUATE the sentences below:

1. On July 4 1776 the Declaration of Independence was adopted
2. Dr J E Gallegos lives in Santa Fe New Mexico which is about three hundred miles from Amarillo Texas
3. Do you want one of these three ladies watches or shall I try to find you another
4. What may I ask did Officer J R Grimaldo offer you
5. Please answer the following does this book belong to Paul Joe Bill Tom or Oscar

ASSIGNMENT

FOR OFFICERS OR PROSPECTIVE OFFICERS.

Write one paragraph using "I" as the subject and fulfill the following:

WHO are you? .

WHAT do you do?

WHEN do you do it?

WHERE do you do it?

HOW do you do it?

This paragraph should be at least 70 words and not more than 120 words.

You do not have to write on the above in the order given you.

Put your name and the date on the top two lines of your paper. Write clearly, neatly, and legibly in ink.

This assignment is to be completed by _____

_____.

Essentials of a Well- Written Report

Policy Statement - Apodaca/Duran Consent Decree

Subject: Inmate Discipline

8. MISCONDUCT REPORTS: Informal resolution of minor incidents is encouraged; however, when any employee witnesses a serious violation of institutional rules or regulations, or has reasonable belief that a serious violation has occurred, the employee has a responsibility to prepare a misconduct report.

The initial misconduct report shall contain the date and time of the violation, the date and time the report was written and the date and time the report was submitted to the shift supervisor for review. The report shall include the specific rules violated; a formal statement of the charge; any unusual inmate behavior; any staff or inmate witnesses; disposition of any physical evidence; any immediate action taken, including the use of force; and the reporting officer's signature.

Following the initial investigation by the reporting employee, the misconduct report must be submitted for supervisory review and a copy given to the inmate within 24 hours (or one regular working day) from the date of the incident, or when it was reported to the reporting officer.

Further Notes:

Does this report need to be written?
Am I the person to write this report?

Further Basics:

WHO is involved?

WHAT is involved?

WHEN did it happen?

WHERE did it happen?

HOW did it happen?

WHAT ACTION was taken?

BE SPECIFIC - Describe the incident using specifics such as language used and body language used

BE CONCISE - Stick to the facts; do not ramble and add details which are irrelevant

BE ACCURATE - Attempt to make certain the written report bespeaks the incident clearly and coherently as it happened

The Penitentiary of New Mexico

MEMORANDUM

To: Lt.

From: C/C

Re: Unit Count

Date 4-20-83

I c/o come in for duty at the food serve Dept. At 10:45 a.m. when Lt. Sandavol order me to go help with the count on the south side. I was helping in cb-2 with the count with c/o and the first count was 33 inmates in the unit when count was called to control center they said to recount so we recounted and come up with 33 again and the count was steel wrong at that time .So the c/o incharge of cb-2 checked the board and we recount again the count come up to 34 this time. At that time we fund out why the count was coming out to 33..

The caseworker)and Lt. where having Committe in the unit at the time of count. We didn't know that they where there at that time for the unit officer didn;t tall us.

cc Lt.

S.C.S.

Capt.

Warden

COI

Incident Report:

Inmate Blankety Blank # 50126 - May 15-83

At Approximately 1:05 pm May 15, 1983 I, XXXXXXXXX CQI observed 50126# Blankety Blank being told", to stay outside". of Unit F-1. "I want you to stay out, stay out, you have no pass from Food Service to come back in Unit during working time.

CO. Blankety Blank came to A-1 grill and witnessed this also.

Inmate Blankety Blank went in with other inmates and again was told to go back out," and he refused a second direct order,

SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO

WRITTEN: 5/15/83
Date: 5/15/83
Time: 2:00 PMMISCONDUCT REPORT

Name: Incorrect Name Number: XXXXXX Unit: XXXX Assignment: Food Service
 Date: May 15, 1983 Time: 1:05 p.m. Location of Incident: F-1 Grill
 Charge: Category (B), Paragraph (B) Page (7)
(B) Refusing to obey a lawful order of any staff member

A. Reporting Employee's Statement:

Inmate Blank came to the grill of F-1, Stating the he wanted in (Dorm F-1 Blank Blank asked him for his pass, he said no, I told him he is not coming in with out a pass." Ok Blank I am going to let these people in, but you stay out, and he still came in Officer Blank, also told him (Blank) about the pass situation in the officer Station, And Inmate Blank still went in the dorm. This individual came from the food service, his work assignment, to dorm F-1 at approximately 1:00 PM. Officer Blank Blank officer of dorm A-1 witnessed this incident along with Officer Blank. And according to policy a pass is to be issued from work assignment back to unit.

Witnessed by: _____

Evidence Submitted to: _____

Reporting Employee's Signature: _____

Title: _____

Submitted to Supervisor: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

B. Supervisory Review:

Received: Date: _____

Time: _____

Review Commenced: Date: _____

Time: _____

Inmate Received Copy: Date: _____

Time: _____

Inmate Signature: _____

Review Completed: Date: _____

Time: _____

Supervisor's Signature: _____